

# School Reform WHERE IT COUNTS

November 2000

## Allegany County

### Bel Air Elementary

Posting a 2000 MSPAP composite score of 64.6 percent, Allegany County's Bel Air Elementary School has surpassed the district average of 47.4 percent and is well on its way to meeting the state's satisfactory standard of 70 percent. Especially impressive are the school's dramatic gains in reading achievement. Since MSPAP testing began, third-grade reading scores have climbed 36.8 points to 61.8 percent while fifth-grade scores have jumped an unbelievable 45.3 points to 67.5 percent.

The school credits a "balanced" literacy program promoting school improvement and student achievement with its solid reading performance. The program includes a balanced emphasis on all three purposes of reading—reading to be informed, reading to perform a task, and

Continued on page 2



The success of the Maryland School Performance Program is a direct reflection of the successes made in individual classrooms. On these pages, you will find profiles of schools and school systems indicative of the education reform taking place across the state. These stories are examples of how innovation, dedication, and collaboration increase student achievement—just one indication of which is impressive gains on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP), one of the state's prime tools for encouraging school improvement. The wide range of stories is testament to the potential for success that exists in both large and small systems, and in both urban and rural schools. Although MSPAP is administered (in six content areas) in grades three, five, and eight, the achievements lauded on these pages are the result of a unified effort and vision among administrators, teachers, and school communities.

## Anne Arundel County

### Bodkin Elementary

In 1999, Anne Arundel County's Bodkin Elementary wowed schools across the state by earning a MSPAP composite of 82.5 percent, an increase of more than 25 percentage points over the previous year. The school proved its staying power this year with a similarly impressive MSPAP composite of 79.1 percent.

Principal Rocco Ferretti, who has been with the school for the past seven years, attributes recent gains to consistent instruction. Several years ago, the school recognized that students were having difficulty expressing themselves in writing. Teachers visited Howard County's Worthington Elementary for new ideas and came away impressed with the school's continuity in writing instruction. Now, all teachers use a few agreed-upon strategies and graphic organizers for teaching writing. The strategies are reinforced in each grade and even in content areas like math, physical education, and music.

Among other techniques, teachers encourage children to use Power Writing, a strategy that helps students organize their writing and support the main idea with details. Ferretti emphasizes that the writing instruction is not rigid, saying, "The kids are being more creative now. They produce some really fantastic writing, and they are starting to use these

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Successful Schools, Successful School Systems

**Everyone, in one way or another, is involved in helping our children succeed.**

Minority achievement is a priority at Buckingham Elementary in rural Worcester County. In 2000, the Title I school's African American students improved writing and language usage scores by 17.9 percentage points and 20.4 percentage points, respectively, over 1999.

One of the school's efforts to improve minority student achievement is Project Outreach, an after-school tutoring program held in three community churches. "It's a wonderful program because of all of the involvement," says math resource teacher Wynette Morris, "not only from the community, but from administrators and even cafeteria workers, who prepare snacks for the kids. Everyone, in one way or another, is involved in helping our children succeed."

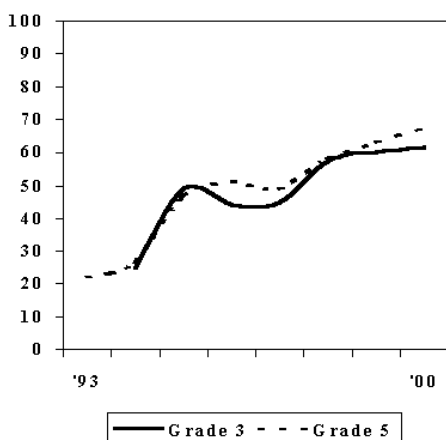
## Bel Air • Continued from page 1

reading for literary experience—through teacher modeling to promote independent student work. Instructional groupings are also balanced, with students receiving large group to individualized instruction. Through the program, students are exposed to a variety of genre.

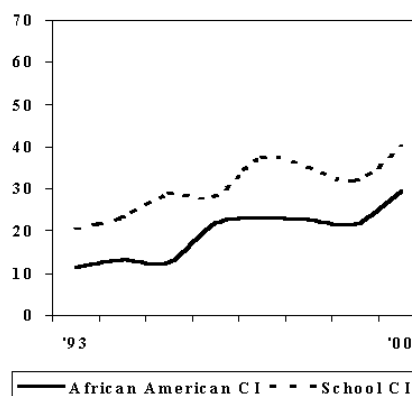
Additional techniques the school uses to improve reading and writing are:

- Conducting individual writing conferences as early as first grade.
- Expecting students to read and write in all content areas.
- Having students score their own writing.
- Building classroom libraries.
- Making time to DEAR (Drop Everything And Read).

## MSPAP Reading



## MSPAP Composite



Resource teachers like Morris float among the three Project Outreach centers and deliver reading and math instruction. Two home-school facilitators, who also work full-time at the school, help run the centers. Volunteers, such as senior citizens, high school students, and even retired teachers, also support Project Outreach. With the efforts of so many people, Project Outreach is able to operate the centers three times a week, with about 30 children per center. Services are targeted primarily toward first- to fourth-grade African American boys with deficiencies in reading and math.

"When children see us coming into their community and spending time with them after school hours, that sends a powerful message that we really do care that they succeed academically," says Morris.

## School Reform WHERE IT COUNTS

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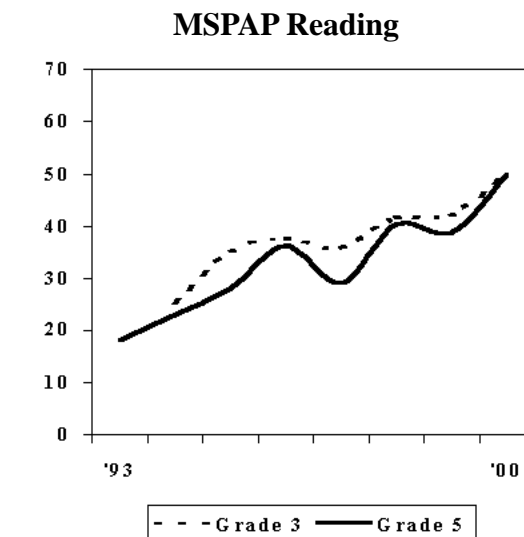
## School System Highlight

# Caroline County Public Schools

Continuous and consistent best describe Caroline County's reading program. Two years ago, the school system narrowed its instructional focus to help schools meet state reading standards. The system's primary goal, however, was never raising numbers. It was to help students become successful readers and writers.

The county's current work on its language arts curriculum is emblematic of its continuity efforts. "Our K to eight curriculum will become a continuous curriculum," says Helen Schmidt, supervisor of elementary schools. For example, when a student enters the third grade, the curriculum continues to build on the foundation set in the second grade.

Consistency is the other key to helping Caroline County's students read and write well. Part of the consistency process is ensuring that the school system's curriculum aligns with state content standards. Another part is whittling down the number of teaching strategies used systemwide. After a middle school survey revealed that teachers were using 164 different strategies to teach



**We are having teachers across the county use the same language in teaching the strategies ...**

reading/language arts, the district narrowed these down to a core of six strategies that research showed are most effective. University of Maryland professor Peter Dewitz was then hired to teach those reading strategies to staff at the county's two middle schools.

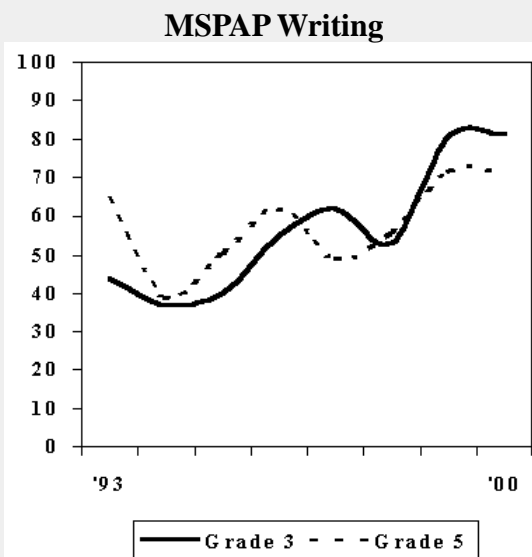
"If you don't have a well-trained staff, you can't make progress," says Schmidt. "We are having teachers across the county use the same language in teaching the strategies and really trying to address what children have to do in terms of the curriculum outcomes."

Even though the changes are systemic, Schmidt says the credit for good results and improved learning rests with the hardworking classroom teachers and the dedicated school administrators. Students also benefit from the solid foundation built with Caroline County's all-day kindergarten program. The system even provides prekindergarten for at-risk children.

"We aren't doing anything innovative. Rather we are just using good professional sense to teach more effectively, to stay focused, to monitor student progress and to give teachers feedback," says Schmidt. "The support and leadership of Dr. Larry Lorton, superintendent of schools, and Dr. Cynthia Spicer, director of elementary/middle schools, have enabled the school system to concentrate its energies on doing a few things well."

**Bodkin • Continued from page 1**

strategies independently." He knew the school's focus had hit home when he received a letter from students requesting changes to the cafeteria menu. The letter was written in the Power Writing style.



## Kent County

# Chestertown Middle School

“Our teachers work very hard,” says Chestertown Middle School principal Herb Mills. “I’m also lucky to have really great students—I’m so proud of them.”

Mills has every reason to be pleased with staff and students at this diverse Kent County school. In 2000, eighth-grade reading and writing scores on MSPAP soared to 60.2 and 80.4 percent, respectively.

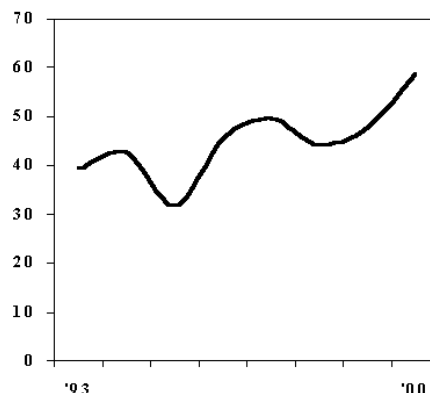
Asked to explain the school’s impressive progress, Mills says, “Over my past few years as principal, I’ve found that a performance-based assessment is something you prepare for all year. It’s a way of life for us. We don’t pull out practice tasks a month before the test.”

Adds Mills, “What we do is integrate reading and writing across the curriculum. We are really stressing to students the importance of reading.”

The school carefully examines student achievement data. After MSPAP scores are released each year, Kent County schools come together as a system to analyze data. “We really pick it apart,” says Mills. “The following week, we come back together to make instructional decisions based on the data.”

Chestertown students having difficulty with reading and math receive academic intervention three times a week after

**MSPAP Composite**

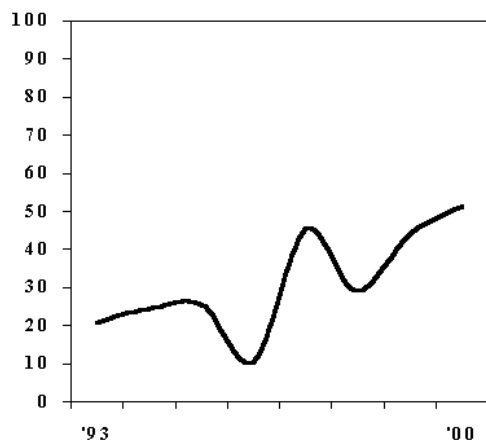


school or for several weeks during the summer. Last year, Mills made academic intervention mandatory for eighth-grade students not meeting expectations in reading and math. This year, mandatory intervention was expanded to seventh-graders. The program has seen encouraging results. According to Mills, “Fifteen students were identified for extra help last year. That number dropped to four by the end of the year.”

## Garrett County

# Crellin Elementary

**MSPAP Composite**



Crellin Elementary, a tiny school in western Garrett County, has big reason to celebrate in 2000!

Despite a poverty rate of 58.6 percent, students at Crellin have made steady academic progress since MSPAP testing began in 1993, soaring from a composite score of 20.9 percent to 51.4 percent in 2000.

“MSPAP has been the driving force behind our reform,” says Crellin Elementary principal Keith Harvey. “Everyone

**Everyone feels the instructional changes and programs that we have implemented are definitely preparing our students for a brighter future.**

feels the instructional changes and programs that we have implemented are definitely preparing our students for a brighter future.”

Administrators, staff, students, and parents instituted many changes to meet the school’s challenges and to encourage students to reach their academic potential. The school improvement team worked closely with families and the Project Circles program, a networking program for parents on how to help children succeed in school. The STAR (Students Taking Active Responsibility) discipline program helped students understand accountability and learn to take responsibility for their actions. The staff collaborated with a neighboring school to develop and refine performance assessments in reading, social studies, science, and math. Students looked forward to academic pep rallies that highlighted improvements to attendance and academic achievement.

The changes have met with great success at Crellin. In 2000, third-grade reading and language usage scores rose over 38 percentage points, while writing scores increased 53.4 percentage points.

## Baltimore City

# Dallas F. Nicholas Sr. Elementary

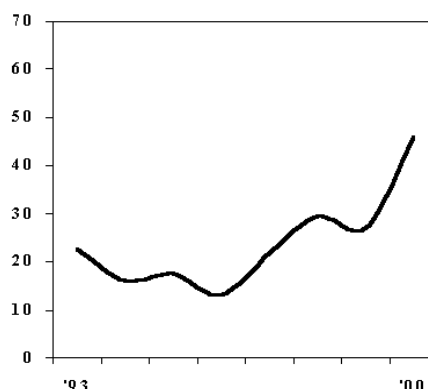
Dallas Nicholas Elementary sits in the heart of Baltimore City, a block above one of Baltimore's busiest thoroughfares. Despite the challenges of its urban surroundings and a nearly 100-percent poverty rate, the school is a hub of learning, sharing, and accomplishment.

Since 1993, the school's composite MSPAP score has more than doubled, climbing from only 22.7 percent of students performing satisfactorily to 45.9 percent in 2000.

The school's success is due in large part to principal Irma Johnson's focus on staff development. "Our emphasis has been instruction, and only instruction," says Johnson. "In order to make sure our teachers become good instructors, we provide constant professional development and training. Smart teachers create smart kids."

In 1996, when not one third grader was performing at the satisfactory level in math, that's when Johnson and her staff started focusing. The school began participating in Baltimore City's MARS (Mathematics: Application and Reasoning Skills) program, which provides intensive training in math instruction. Teachers met regularly to share techniques for improving student achievement and to discuss books that they were reading as a group. This year, 46.8 percent of third graders are performing at the satisfactory level in math.

The secret weapons in Dallas Nicholas' arsenal, however, are the Experience Corps volunteers. Through this



**MSPAP  
Composite**

partnership with Johns Hopkins University, senior citizens volunteer two hours daily at the school. Before Experience Corps members started in the classroom, school staff trained them in instructional techniques and behavior management. Now, Experience Corps members help out in classrooms and tutor students after school.

Johnson is quick to credit her staff with improving student achievement. "Our teachers have the experience along with the willingness to try new ideas and to keep learning fun and refreshing," she says. What remains a challenge at Dallas Nicholas Elementary? Strengthening the home-school connection. "With more parent involvement," says Johnson, "our kids will soar even higher."

## Elkton Middle School

## Cecil County

"Our success on MSPAP has been a school-wide effort," says Elkton Middle School principal Bob Gerard. "It's not just an eighth-grade test, it's a sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade initiative." The school, located in rural Cecil County, has once again posted impressive achievement gains.

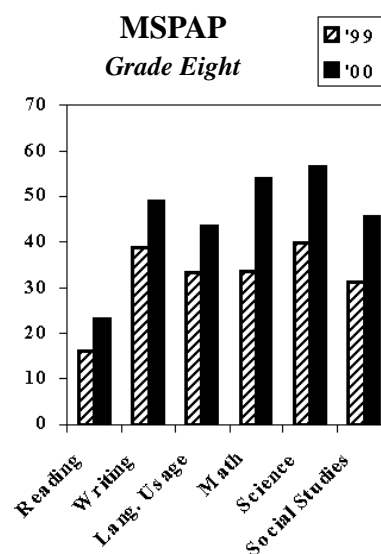
In the 1999-2000 school year, Principal Bob Gerard and Elkton Middle staff focused on boosting reading and writing skills—to great success. The school's 2000 reading and writing scores increased over the previous year by 6.8 and 10.3 percentage points, respectively.

According to Gerard, the school "tore apart" its school improvement plan and rebuilt it with specific expectations as to how much and how often students should be reading and writing in different subjects. Language arts class sizes were reduced to an average of 18 students.

Gerard has also focused on mathematics, increasing staffing so that for the past two years students have had daily 90-minute blocks of both language arts and math. The result? In 2000, 53.7 percent of Elkton Middle students met the state satisfactory standard in math, a gain of 20 points over 1999. The school recorded increases in CTBS math scores and achieved the highest sixth-grade Functional Math Test pass rate in Cecil County.

Differentiated instruction is a critical component of Elkton Middle's academic and staff development programs. Classes are grouped heterogeneously, and according to Gerard, teachers are committed to challenging all students appropriately, not just "teaching to the middle." Language arts teacher Melissa Freil explains that,

"We decided to cluster our very top, 'challenge' students. For example, last year I taught three 90-minute classes, and in one of those classes I had a small cluster of about five challenge students. Sometimes these students worked together, and other times they were spread out among the rest of the class. I keep the groupings very flexible."



## Washington County

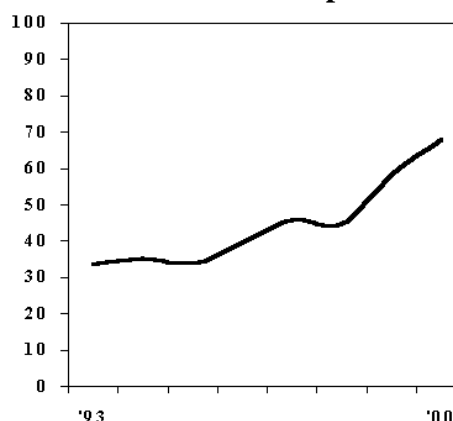
# Fountain Rock Elementary

At Fountain Rock Elementary, there is no question that reading is priority one.

Every other month, the school holds a Family Reading Night. For about four hours, parents read to their children and receive pointers from staff on how to engage their children in reading. Family Reading Nights are also a time to explain to parents the Reading Counts program, a computer-based program that builds students' reading comprehension. The event is also a celebration of reading. Teachers dress up in costume as book characters and each child receives a new, hardcover book to take home.

Even during the summer, there is a focus on reading. Last year the school won a \$10,000 grant to fund a summer program, which provided 60 children four hours of instruction per day for several weeks. During this time, students honed their "reading to be informed" skills. The investment paid off. Third-grade reading scores climbed

MSPAP Composite



from 45.3 percent in 1999 to 66.1 percent in 2000. Fifth-grade reading scores skyrocketed from 59.6 percent in 1999 to 82.9 percent in 2000.

## Baltimore City

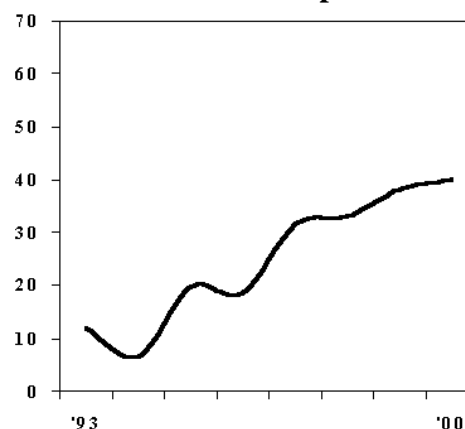
# George Washington Elementary

At George Washington Elementary, a 1999 National Distinguished Title I school in Baltimore City, the excitement is unmistakable. "I just love it," says principal Florence Johnson. "Out of 27 years, this is the most exciting."

Johnson is encouraged by George Washington's involvement with Achievement First, an academic program designed by the Fund for Educational Excellence that emphasizes literacy. Using the Achievement First model, students read in their language arts and content classes for a total of three hours daily, two hours of which are uninterrupted. Johnson is particularly pleased with the way the program balances the use of different research-based strategies and fiction and non-fiction texts. Teachers make the time to observe each other's lessons, says Johnson, and are learning to become more effective teachers of reading.

For several years, George Washington has also focused on offering students more opportunities to learn. With the Beyond the Bell after-school program, students have a safe place to go after school to receive extra help in academics, to swim, or to go on field trips to archaeology digs, science

MSPAP Composite



centers, or museums. On Mondays and Thursdays, 20 Johns Hopkins University students help the children with their reading skills. The school also offers a Saturday school program that emphasizes performance-based academic tasks.

## Baltimore County

# Harford Hills Elementary

When principal Susan Hershfeld arrived at Baltimore County's Harford Hills Elementary two years ago, she and her staff were not comfortable with the school's practice of combining different grades within classrooms. So, Hershfeld encouraged teachers to visit other schools and observe how they organized teachers and grades.

Harford Hills teachers found what they were looking for in Fifth District Elementary's "parallel block schedule." Using this model, small groups of students receive a block

of direct reading instruction while a larger group of students simultaneously receives a block of content-area reading instruction.

Harford Hills first piloted the new schedule with third-graders and, after encouraging results, expanded it to second and fourth grades. Since then, the school has discontinued combined-grade classes and reduced reading class sizes to about 8-14 students.

Continued on next page

## Dorchester County

# Hurlock Elementary

With an African American population of 45 percent and more than 10 percent of last year's students speaking Vietnamese, French Creole, or Spanish at home, Dorchester County's Hurlock Elementary is an impressive display of diversity. Equally impressive is the Title I school's steady progress toward state MSPAP standards. Hurlock's 2000 MSPAP composite of 50.8 percent represents a 9.7 percent-age-point gain over 1999.

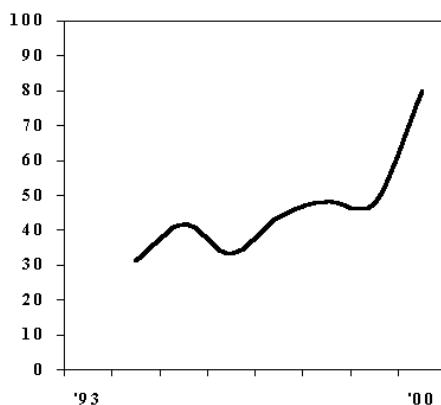
Over the past few years, Hurlock has focused its data analysis, school- and teamwide improvement initiatives, and professional development on the basics—reading, writing, and math. Here are some of the ways Hurlock builds staff cohesion around these fundamentals:

- Quarterly assessments in reading and mathematics provide achievement data. This data is analyzed and the results are used to monitor student progress and instructional efficacy.
- Staff regularly review and discuss current research. Topics and participation vary according to individual or team

## Harford Hills • Continued from page 6

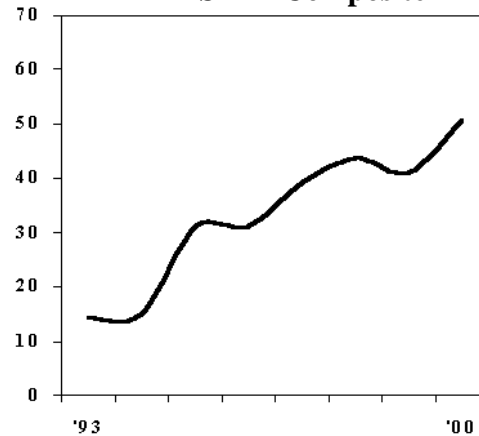
According to third-grade teacher Alexandria Arnold, grade-level teams meet often to plan instruction. "We really integrate reading with content," she says. "Whatever I'm teaching in science and social studies, we will try to incorporate into the direct reading instruction. If students are learning about the weather, we will read about it in science and social studies. Then, in reading class, they may read stories with weather elements."

From 1998-2000, Harford Hills' MSPAP composite increased by more than 10 percentage points. In 2000, the school posted a MSPAP composite of 69.6 percent and third-graders met the satisfactory standard in all content areas. According to Arnold, much of the credit for the school's success belongs to Hershfeld. "Sue's leadership, focus, and drive to succeed have really benefited the school," says Arnold. "She is a wonderful principal."



**MSPAP  
Reading  
Grade Three**

## MSPAP Composite



needs. However, the discussions are always based on identified student needs in reading, writing, or math.

- Professional development is linked to the school's reading, writing, and math initiatives. Cross-grade collaboration sessions are held regularly.
- Sixty minutes daily of grade-level team planning builds genuine collaboration. During this time, teams review student work together, share strategies, and keep each other up-to-date on content being taught.

## Charles County

# John Hanson Middle School

"Finding an answer to the question of why problems existed is the key to developing effective strategies for achieving our goal: A world-class education for every student," says Heath Morrison, former principal of Charles County's John Hanson Middle School. "Improving instruction was our primary motivation and improved student scores would be a bonus."

The school provides students extra support through the district's Meet in the Middle and extended-day programs, which provide students one-on-one tutoring, guidance, and support. Students receive help with academics and develop an appreciation for accountability and responsibility through the "Saturday School" program. In order to improve the climate of the school and the attitudes of the students, the school developed a motto, known as the Three A's: Attitude, Attendance, and Achievement. Staff work hard to instill this message in every child: If you have a positive attitude, and you make every effort to attend school, you will achieve.

Current John Hanson principal Doreen Brandes recognizes the impact this motto and its principles have had on the school. Students have developed a vested interest in

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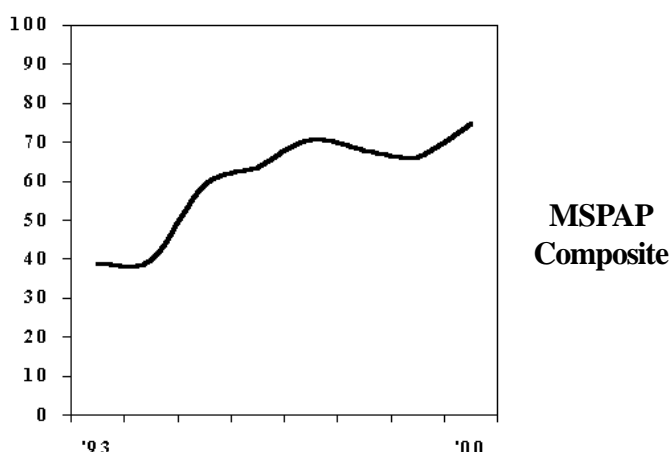
## Prince George's County

# Kenilworth Elementary

During principal Richard Melzer's seven-year tenure at Kenilworth Elementary, he has led the school to a 2000 MSPAP composite of 74.7 percent. This year, third-graders met the state's excellent criteria in two content areas, fifth-graders in four content areas.

Melzer believes that student performance has benefited from a three-year effort to individualize instruction. "The idea is to find ways for kids to succeed and to make sure they're being challenged on every level," he says. Teachers have received support in planning differentiated instruction at the system level through Prince George's County's Talented and Gifted program and at the school level through enrichment and reading teachers.

"We're also moving toward more child-oriented classrooms," says Melzer. In grades one through six, students are participating in literacy circles. Within these circles, students are responsible for selecting their own books, completing stance questions, and discussing books with their peers. Students are then taught to assess their own work as well as that of fellow group members. The



literacy circles have gotten students more involved and given them responsibility for their own learning. This model also lends itself to differentiated instruction, as students choose books that are appropriate for their reading levels. Sharing their ideas within the literacy circle, says Melzer, "prepares students to express themselves in writing."

## Montgomery County

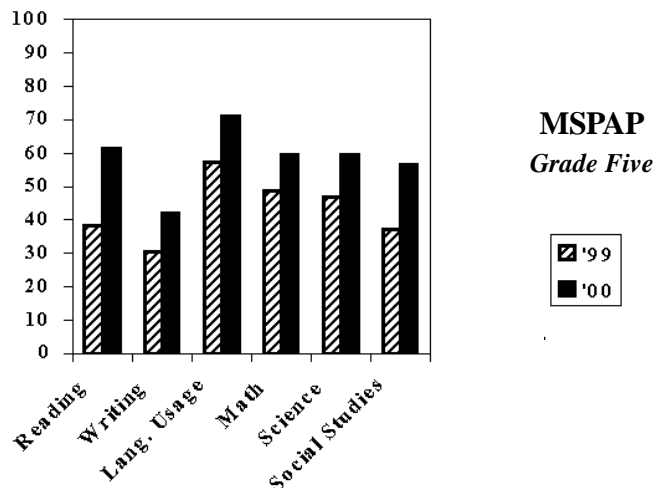
# Ronald A. McNair Elementary

**If you know what the bar is, then you can jump over it.**

With an enrollment of 1,030 students—nearly double that of a typical elementary school—Ronald A. McNair is the largest elementary school in Montgomery County. Principal Michael Kline emphasizes the need to keep track of every student's progress at such a large school. Careful monitoring of student achievement is just one reason Ronald McNair jumped 12 percentage points in its MSPAP composite in 2000.

"I've always required portfolios of student work, which include data as well as samples," said Kline, now in his third year as principal. "A baseline is created in September and throughout the year the information is used by teachers, students, and parents. If you know what the bar is, then you can jump over it."

Kline believes the only way to make progress is to include the parent and student component, which the portfolios provide. The portfolios are designed to travel with students as they move to each grade so that a body of information is available to help them reach their potential. A fifth-grade MSPAP composite of 58.1 percent indicates that this tool is working.



Teachers, support staff (which includes reading and staff development specialists), and the principal rely heavily on data gleaned from a variety of measures, including MSPAP and the school system's criterion-referenced tests, to make the instructional changes necessary to ensure that students understand the material. Kline works with teachers individually, as does the school's staff development specialist, to analyze data and "hone in on specific student or class needs." Such collaborative work has resulted in "nice gains on CRT [Montgomery County's criterion-referenced test] and MSPAP."



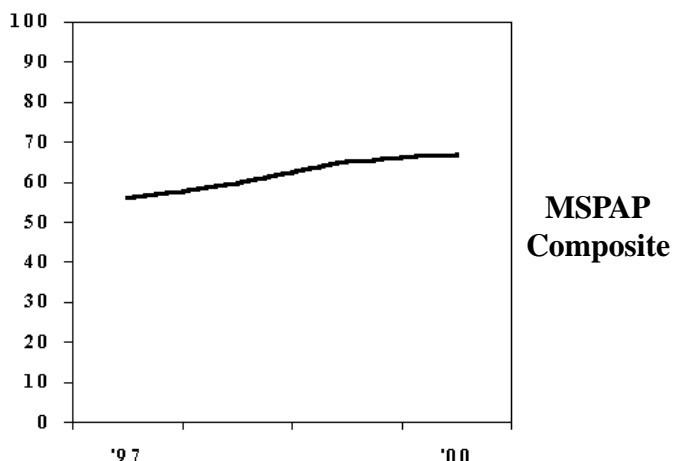
# Oklahoma Road Middle School

Oklahoma Road Middle School in the southeast corner of Carroll County opened in January 1997, drawing students and teachers from Sykesville Middle School. The end of the school year brought about more changes, including a significant turnover in staff as teachers involuntarily transferred were allowed to return to their former schools and the student enrollment increased.

Principal Catherine Hood said uniting the staff and the community and setting high expectations for all became a priority.

The 1997 data showed the school's MSPAP composite at 56.1 percent and provided the school with a baseline from which to grow. The instructional staff projected an attitude of "Our scores are great, but I can do better!" By 2000, the school's MSPAP composite rose to 67.0 percent, and the school achieved the state's excellent standard in language usage, mathematics, science, and writing with over 25 percent of eighth graders reaching the excellent level and over 70 percent reaching the satisfactory level.

Principal Hood said technology became a catalyst for uniting the staff and building camaraderie as teachers participated in staff development activities and helped each

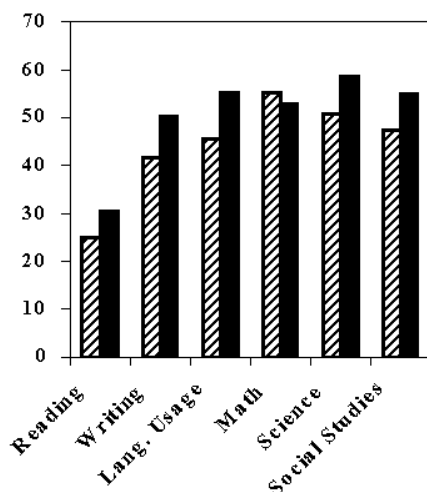


other develop computer skills. Students became more enthusiastic about learning as they became familiar with using technology to give presentations and to develop electronic portfolios, and they became more serious about learning because teachers in all subjects demanded the same high standards as teachers in core academic areas.

# Patuxent Valley Middle School

Howard County

**MSPAP**  
*Grade Eight*



In his five years at Patuxent Valley Middle and 26 years in Howard County, principal Sterlind Burke has found that the key to improvement lies in a tenet central to America's public education system: equity. And the key to equity, he says, is process. Using an equity model developed in the 1980s, Burke establishes clear-cut processes with which he and his staff can ensure that achievement will occur. At its heart, says Burke, is the belief that "educational outcomes cannot be predicted by race or socioeconomic status."

Burke and his leadership team use the model (and its processes) as a filter for everything: programming, placement, and instruction. But the model is about more than

**Educational outcomes cannot be predicted by race or socioeconomic status.**

ensuring access, says Burke. It's about ensuring access to the classes, teachers, and instruction that will most challenge students.

Implicit in this equity is accountability for all. That means not only that all students at Patuxent Valley will be enrolled in a reading course but that struggling students will be enrolled in an accelerated course.

It means that, when staff discovered boys' writing performance was markedly worse than girls', lead English teacher Mary Catania started working with small groups each day, using an instructional model effective in cueing the boys having difficulty responding to prompts. Sometimes it takes only once or twice to get them on the right track, Catania says.

Block scheduling also helps Patuxent Valley's ethos of accountability for all. "The schedule gives teachers the flexibility to plan their time better and gives children a chance to be with the experts without interruption," Burke says. And it gives children who would otherwise fall through the cracks the luxury of intensive tutoring.

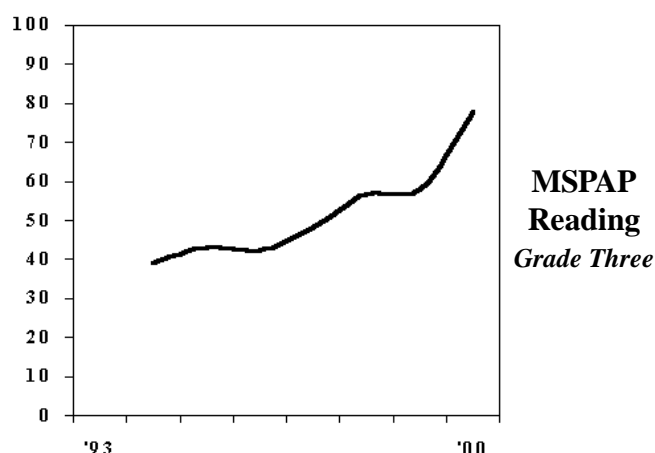
# Preston Elementary

Ninety-seven percent of Preston Elementary's parents had at least one face-to-face parent-teacher conference last year. And the year before that. When asked how she garners such impressive participation, principal Susan Frank says rather simply, "It's an expectation." That sentiment, however, belies the effort and vigilance Frank and her teachers devote to the goal.

Frank gives credit to the parents, the majority of whom, she says, are eager participants. She also employs a paraprofessional three hours a day to act as a parent liaison. The liaison arranges transportation for parents who have difficulty getting to school or schedules home visits instead. And Frank holds teachers accountable for results. "I want to know how many conferences they've scheduled, who they've seen, who they haven't seen, and why not."

In fact, through Preston's Readers from Birth program, Frank and her staff cultivate this contact with parents long before their children enter school. The program, designed to develop early literacy skills and to build early home-school relationships, starts every time a child is born. That's when Preston's parent liaison pays a visit and drops off a book, along with other educational materials.

Then, twice a month, the parents are invited to school for story time. While the children engage in post-story activities, their parents learn how to develop literacy and



pre-literacy skills. And at the end of the session, everyone gets another book to take home. Before being split into morning and evening sessions to accommodate both working and stay-at-home parents, the program routinely drew 20-30 children at a time. Now in its fourth "real" year of operation—the first was dedicated to gathering materials and money—Readers from Birth also attracts child care providers and their charges.

The greatest benefit, says Frank, is that parents—even parents whose children aren't students five days a week—feel as though the school is their own.

# Prince Street School

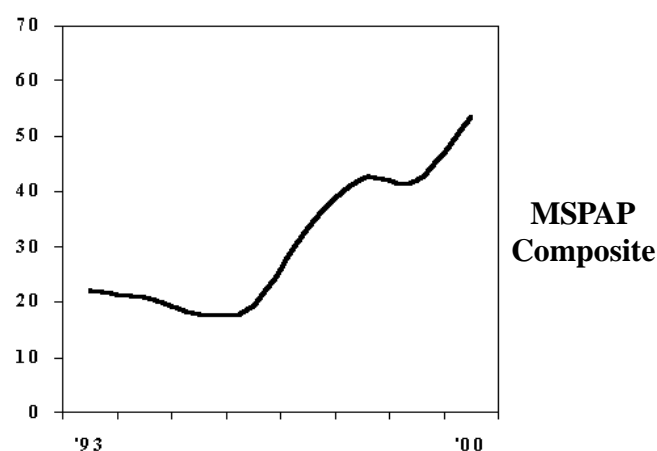
Prince Street School, a high-poverty school on Maryland's lower Eastern Shore, hosts an extraordinarily diverse student population. Nearly 57 percent of the 463 preK-5 students are African American, and students hail from as far away as Korea, Haiti, Pakistan, and Ukraine.

Despite a poverty rate of 70 percent, the school's MSPAP composite has more than doubled since testing began in 1993, rising from 22 percent in 1993 to 53.5 percent in 2000. A National Title I Distinguished School, Prince Street serves as mentor to Somerset County's Marion Sarah Peyton Elementary through the new Maryland Title I Partner Schools program.

When asked to explain Prince Street's strong academic progress, principal Karen Leimann cites ongoing efforts such as the Houghton-Mifflin reading program, after-school tutoring, and grade-level planning. The staff also reads books together, most recently Crystal Kuykendall's *From Rage to Hope: Strategies for Reclaiming Black and Hispanic Students*.

A recent initiative Leimann credits with making a difference at Prince Street is the Lightspan Achieve Now program. In 1998, through a national grant, the school

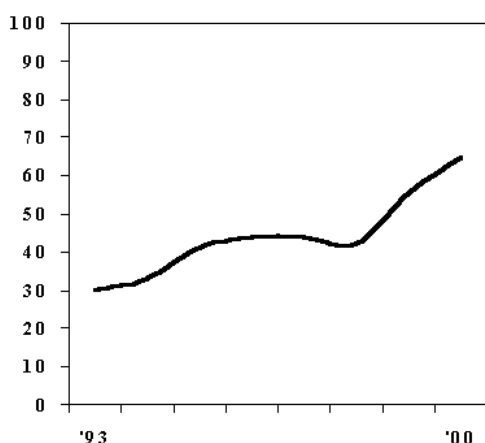
...the school's MSPAP composite has more than doubled...



bought enough Lightspan educational software to create a lending library. The software, which reinforces math and language arts skills taught in the classroom, runs on digital workstations, such as the Sony Playstation™. Each week, second- and third-grade students take home new software with which to practice. The program has been wildly popular among students and parents, and the school has seen great improvement in third-grade reading, writing, language usage, and mathematics scores.

themselves and pride in their school community. These simple changes in attitude produced monumental changes in environment. The “bonus” for improving attitude and environment at John Hanson? A nine-point rise in the school’s MSPAP composite index (from 55.7 percent in 1999 to 64.7 percent in 2000); a 12-point increase in writing scores (from 60.2 to 72.4); and a 15-point gain in social studies (from 51.1 to 66.4).

**MSPAP Composite**



## Spring Garden Elementary

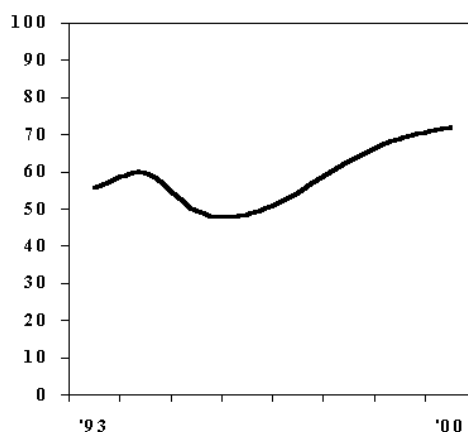
Carroll County

**...the bustling school enjoys high parent and community involvement, and scores of parents can be seen walking their children to and from school each day.**

Located 30 miles northwest of Baltimore is Hampstead, one of the most rapidly growing areas in Carroll County. And in Hampstead is Spring Garden Elementary, a 600-student capacity school that bulges at the seams with approximately 770 students. Fortunately, the bustling school enjoys high parent and community involvement, and scores of parents can be seen walking their children to and from school each day.

In 2000, the school posted a MSPAP composite of 66.7 percent, a more than 20-point gain since 1993. This year, fifth-graders shone, meeting the criteria for excellence in math, science, and social studies. Fifth-grade reading and writing scores increased 9.1 and 7.5 percentage points, respectively. In November 2000, Spring Garden was named a Maryland Blue Ribbon School.

Principal Gloria Julius credits a combination of programs with the school’s marked academic improvement. One of these is Project Together, a character education program that emphasizes the importance of respect, responsibility, and honesty in dealing positively with other people.

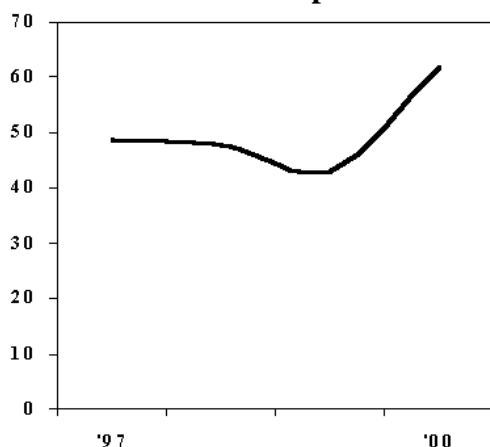


**MSPAP  
Composite  
Grade Five**

The Spring Garden Character Club, comprised of student representatives, plans projects to encourage these character traits in themselves and classmates. The school’s guidance counselor works hand-in-hand with teachers, parents, and students to plan projects, lessons, and small group discussions that will help children develop into caring adults. The school’s support room promotes the school-wide discipline policy, and a support room assistant works proactively with at-risk students to help them solve problems and prevent conflicts. Since the support room became an integral part of the school in 1998, office referrals have decreased from 207 to 54.

# St. Leonard Elementary

MSPAP Composite



In more than two decades as a school administrator, Ted Haynie pinpointed ideas he saw as keys to success. Even before he was named the first principal at St. Leonard Elementary in Calvert County in 1996, he had envisioned a blueprint.

Haynie began making changes at St. Leonard and remained patient despite the school's respectable, but flat, MSPAP scores. Now the school community is grateful that Haynie did not waiver from his convictions.

## Believing in what you are doing turns out to be a great thing.

In 2000, St. Leonard Elementary earned a MSPAP composite of 61.9 percent, an increase of 18.7 percentage points over last year. Fifth-graders alone boosted their MSPAP composite from 46.9 percent in 1999 to 70.6 percent in 2000.

Writing is one of the keys to St. Leonard's success. "We wrote and wrote and wrote last year," says Haynie. "We used a strategy called R.A.C.E. and I really believe we institutionalized it. After all, MSPAP is a writing test."

R.A.C.E. is an acronym for: **R**estate the question; **A**nsWER the question; **C**ite evidence from the text; and **E**xtend your answer.

Success at St. Leonard is truly a team effort.

Every staff member serves on one of the three school improvement action teams. Once a month teachers submit a writing sample from each student to the school's Student Learning Specialist. And, once a week, teachers come to work 40 minutes early to share ideas and plan together.

"Believing in what you are doing," says Haynie, "turns out to be a great thing."

# Town Creek Elementary

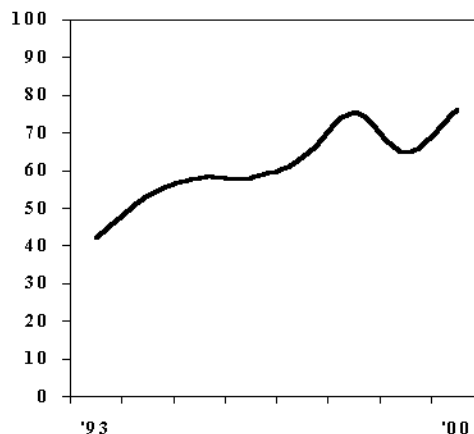
St. Mary's County

**...we also have a very close staff and a caring community that, together, really support students.**

Town Creek Elementary offers its students so many rich, engaging opportunities to learn that it's no surprise they have surpassed state satisfactory standards on MSPAP. This year the small St. Mary's County school earned an impressive MSPAP composite of 76.2 percent.

At Town Creek, students learn by doing. Instead of looking at pictures, students study plant life and the environment by tending their own gardens! Through a Marylandscapes 2000 grant, the school developed gardens and a quarter-mile fitness trail featuring vegetation native to Maryland. Next year, students running the trail will be able to simultaneously improve their fitness and math skills as they measure distance with mathematical markers.

Students receive equally engaging language arts instruction. For two weeks each year, a poet visits the school, teaching lessons on the creative aspects of poetry as well as technical considerations such as structure and rhyme. Over another two weeks, a professional storyteller teaches children about the history of storytelling, the elements of a good tale, and techniques for delivering a



MSPAP Composite

compelling oral story. Both the storyteller and poet-in-residence work with teachers to enhance their knowledge and teaching of the crafts. Students not only learn about poetry and storytelling, they create and share original stories and poems.

"The beauty of my school," says Principal Kathryn Miluski, "is that it is truly a small, community school. We have limited staff and resources, but we also have a very close staff and a caring community that, together, really support students."

# Worcester County Public Schools

School System  
Highlight

Each year, Worcester County makes steady progress on MSPAP. With a 2000 MSPAP composite of 50.2 percent, the school system is well on its way toward meeting the state standard of 70 percent.

"I attribute our success to the hard work of our teaching staff under the leadership of our building administrators," says superintendent Jon Andes.

Worcester County's primary education reform vehicle is the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Each school meticulously crafts its annual SIP with guidance from the system. In fact, each school improvement team has on it at least one school system staff member.

According to Richard Walker, assistant superintendent of instruction, "Our number one priority is to support schools in their school improvement efforts. They identify in their School Improvement Plans what resources they need to support their efforts. The central office then tries to find those resources."

Many times, those resources are found in grant money. Thus far, the school system has won grants to fund after-school programs, parent involvement initiatives, and staff development activities.

It was a Goals 2000 grant that helped Buckingham Elementary improve minority achievement and community involvement. Project Outreach, an off-site tutoring program targeting African American boys, won for the Worcester County Board of Education the *American School Board Journal* Magna award.

It's not just a facility with grant writing that's driving success in Worcester. Schools also freely share what works with each other. For instance, a new



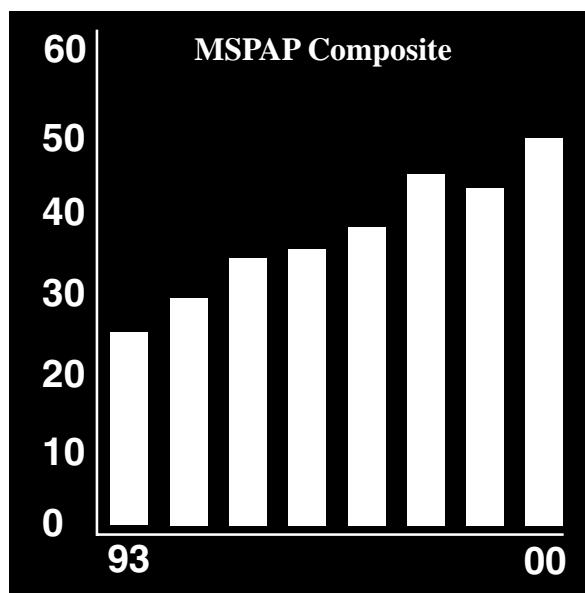
grant-funded program at Pocomoke Elementary builds on Buckingham's success. According to Walker, Pocomoke's after-school program, "reflects the kind of involvement we sought, and got, from Project Outreach. We are trying to draw in the community, to help them understand the problem and to focus on how they can become a part of the solution."

Worcester County is also committed to quality professional development. Last year, school system staff trained each middle school teacher in content-area reading instruction during his or

her team planning session. Teachers then chose a time to have central office staff visit their classrooms to see the new strategies in action. "This helped teachers see that inservice is directly related to the classroom," says Walker. "This year, we've expanded the inservice to high schools."

The school system's approach to school reform is fairly simple. "What we're trying to do in Worcester County," says Andes, "is drive all of our resources to the school level to support the teacher-child interaction we call learning."

**I attribute our success to the hard work of our teaching staff under the leadership of our building administrators.**



## Montgomery County

# Wyngate Elementary

Colleagues have described Wyngate Elementary School principal Barbara Leister as an instructional leader. The veteran teacher and principal likes to think of herself as a “teacher of teachers,” believing that her role is “to help teachers become better so more children will learn.” This hands-on, collaborative approach accounts for the school’s 7.8 percentage-point increase in its 2000 MSPAP composite and the 11.6 percentage-point boost in grade five composite scores.

Leister was greatly influenced by Allan Glalton’s book, *Performance Standards and Authentic Learning*, and has used its assessment-driven instruction model to change the way teachers teach and students learn.

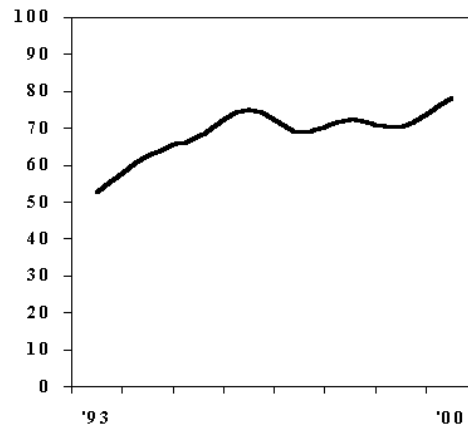
“This is about real-life performance assessments, or authentic learning, and there is no way that you can teach to the test. It is a process of teaching children how to solve problems,” says Leister. However, the basics do not suffer at Wyngate, where students are expected to respond in three seconds to basic multiplication, addition, subtraction and division facts.

A team approach enhances the school’s learning environment. An untenured second-grade teacher might be paired with a team leader. A relocating fifth-grade teacher

involves his or her replacement in parent conferences so the new teacher can benefit from them. And the principal, who is a teacher first, is more than happy to assist with a learning-disabled, gifted and talented student who has “shut down” and is unresponsive to the teacher. By getting the student to focus on the one thing that he can accomplish that day, Leister reaches the student.

“Kids want to learn and teachers want to teach,” says Leister. “It’s my job to help them do both.” In 1996 and 1997 the state honored Wyngate Elementary for its academic progress and featured the school in “Web of Success,” a publication and video project highlighting successful practices.

MSPAP Composite



2000

## Maryland School Performance Report State, Systems and Schools

- INTRODUCTION to the 2000 Maryland School Performance Report
- RESULTS from the 2000 Maryland School Performance Report:  
by State • by Local School System • by School
- FREQUENTLY REQUESTED TRENDS
- DATA DOWNLOADS for Serious Number Crunchers

# [www.msp.msde.state.md.us](http://www.msp.msde.state.md.us)

- Website information on MSPAP opens to the public November 29, 2000.
- School, school system, and state data available.
- User friendly with charts that can be printed.
- Disaggregated results available.
- Graphics make results easier to read.
- Trends plotted out since 1993 for most measures.

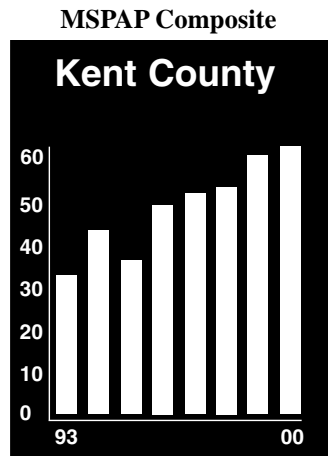


# Highlights 2000

## Maryland School Performance Report

Maryland is in its 11th year of education reform and eighth year of MSPAP testing. The overall state composite has increased from 31.7 percent of students performing at satisfactory in 1993 to 45.3 percent in 2000—a gain of 13.6 percentage points.

Kent County on Maryland's Eastern Shore is the highest performing of the state's 24 school systems, earning a 2000 MSPAP composite of 62.0 percent. Since 1993, Kent has gained 29.4 percentage points in its composite score. In 2000, its third-grade composite of 78.0 percent was the highest in the state of any grade composite score.



Kent County is also Maryland's only school system to meet the state satisfactory standard in a content area. In fact, in 2000 the school system met the criteria for excellence (70 percent of students at satisfactory and 25 percent at excellent) in five content areas at grade three: writing, mathematics, science, language usage and social studies.

Nineteen of Maryland's 24 local school systems increased their MSPAP composites in 2000 over their scores of one year ago.

Seventeen of Maryland's 24 local school systems set their respective record-high MSPAP composites in 2000.

The most improved school systems, in terms of MSPAP composites, are Kent (up 29.4 percentage points since 1993), Worcester (up 24.9 points), and Caroline (up 24.7 points).

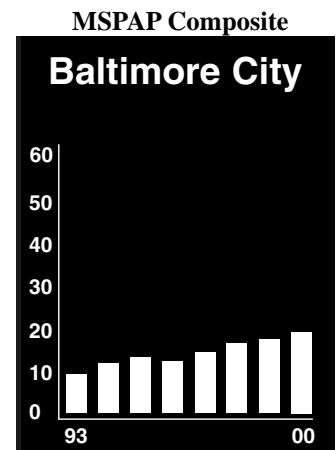
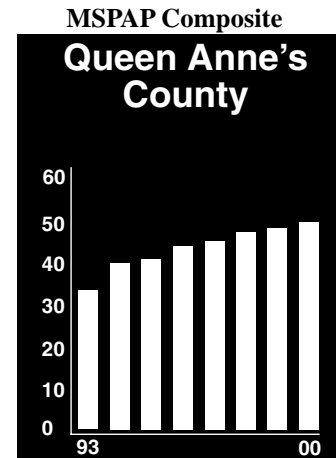
Howard County's fifth-grade MSPAP composite of 63.5 percent and eighth-grade MSPAP composite of 61.0 percent were the highest in the state.

Queen Anne's County, Washington County and Wicomico County have increased their composite scores in each of the eight years of MSPAP testing.

Twelve school systems (Baltimore County, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, Washington and Worcester) produced MSPAP composites of 50 percent or above in 2000, an increase of four systems over 1999. Five other systems (Allegany, Anne Arundel, Caroline, Garrett and St. Mary's) are within 2.6 points of that mark.

Twenty-one of the state's 24 school systems averaged 40 percent or more students at satisfactory in 2000. In 1993, the first year of testing, only four systems reached that figure.

Baltimore City, the state's lowest-performing school system since MSPAP testing began, improved its composite score for the fourth consecutive year, posting a system composite of 20.5 percent—a net gain of 10.1 percentage points since 1993.



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## Ocean City Elementary

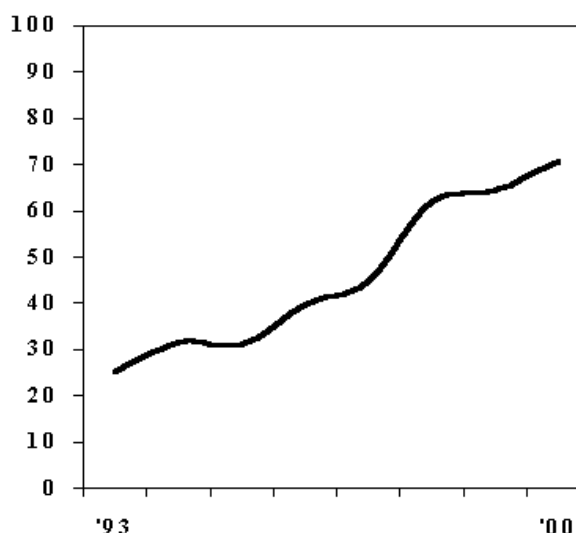
**Our vision is to make all students successful academically, as well as behaviorally, and to make them productive citizens in our society.**

Hard work, consistency, and persistence are the keys to success at Ocean City Elementary in Worcester County, according to principal Irene Kordick. In 2000, the school's MSPAP composite exceeded the state satisfactory standard for the first time, rising to 70.9 percent from 25.4 percent in 1993.

"Our vision is to make all students successful academically, as well as behaviorally, and to make them productive citizens in our society," says Kordick.

To make that vision a reality, the school has adopted a set of norms, maintained and modeled by faculty and staff, and followed by everyone at all times. Norms include such things as speaking in complete sentences, supporting all answers, making good choices, and using vocabulary that demonstrates good manners. Students tackle schoolwork with pencils printed with slogans such as "Support Your Answers: Do Your Best," an idea Kordick and assistant principal Dee Shorts read about in a news article highlighting

**MSPAP Composite**



the success of a Baltimore County school.

The school has adopted a motto: "I can be anything, I can learn anything, if I believe in myself and work hard." And both students and faculty are expected to adhere to it. "At Ocean City Elementary," says Kordick, "everyone is responsible for the job for which they were hired, and all of our jobs support the success of each student."

### **Highlights 2000 • Continued from previous page**

Mount Royal Elementary (Baltimore City) posted a fifth-grade mathematics score of 97.1 percent—the highest in the state.

Pimlico Elementary will become the first school in Baltimore City to graduate from the state's reconstitution-eligible list. Under the leadership of principal Sarah Horsey, the school achieved a MSPAP composite of 69.3 percent in 2000, a 58-point gain since 1993. Pimlico's overall improvement includes increased achievement in third-grade science (15.2 percent in 1997 to 79.5 percent in 2000); fifth-grade reading (2.0 in 1994 to 59.0 in 2000); and fifth-grade mathematics (2.5 in 1996 to 76.9 in 2000).

In 2000, 83 schools exceeded the state satisfactory standard of 70 percent, an increase of six schools over 1999.

Fifty-eight (62 percent) of the 93 schools on the state's reconstitution-eligible list improved their composite scores over 1999.

At Bloomington School (Garrett County), 100 percent of eighth graders met the satisfactory standard in mathematics.

Chestertown Middle (Kent County), a Title I school with 35.6 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price meals, increased its MSPAP composite to 58.9 percent of students at satisfactory (up 19.5 percentage points from 39.4 percent in 1993).